ASSESSING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATORS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the professional competence of Social Studies teacher educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of ex-post factor type. The sample comprised 48 Social Studies educators selected from five public Colleges of Education. Three instruments were used for data collection: Educators Information and Communication Competence Assessment (EICCA), Pedagogical Competence Scale for Teacher Educators (PCSTE) and Educators' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ESEQ). Frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions raised. The findings showed that teacher educators' self-efficacy, level of information and communication competence and educators' pedagogical competencies were high while their level of ICT skills was low. It was recommended that government agencies at the College of Education level should make additional efforts to improve the professional

competencies of teacher educators and promote gender equity within the educational sub-system.

Keywords: Teacher educator, Social Studies, Pre-service teachers, Achievement, Attitude.

Introduction

Teachers are key personnel in the education sector. They play important roles in bringing about transformation in the sector and society at large. Quality teachers are critical to any country's aspiration for transformative development. The focus on the education of teachers for the production of quality teachers has become more critical than ever before because "No education system may rise above the quality of its teachers" (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013, p.30). The primary objectives of teacher education focus on the cultivation of highly motivated, conscientious, and proficient educators who can effectively cater to all levels of Nigeria's educational system. For optimal performance, teachers are expected to remain attuned to evolving ideals within their profession, keeping pace with changes in instructional methodologies and curricular developments.

There has been a growing interest in teacher educator factors and improving academic performance among pre-service or student-teachers over the years (Allexander, 2013). Studies on student-teachers' academic performance have shown that lecturer competence remains one of the major contributing factors to achievement and knowledge among teacher trainees (Hadi & Muhammad, 2019, Liu et al., 2023; Muzanda, 2013). Adunola (2011) and Ganyaupfu (2013) agreed that teaching in the higher institution involves a combined process and procedure that covers the different levels of engagement between the learner and their teacher or lecturer as the cases and environment may dictate.

The work of Chang (2010) underscored the fact that individual learners interpret and respond to inquiries in unique ways which are often based on their individual learning and internalization ability; emphasizing the need for educators, teachers and lecturers involved in the task of teaching and learning to continually evaluate

their competencies and teaching abilities in terms of subject knowledge, attitude, attendance, and teaching skills. It is within the realm of teacher education that these and other elements of an educator's competence can be consistently gauged, monitored, and enhanced.

Social Studies, as a school subject, has the fundamentals of meeting specific human needs and societal aspiration of building amongst the people a morally upright and development-conscious citizenry. It was introduced in Nigeria to significantly re-shape the socio-political life through the orientation of the citizens toward participatory democracy in their quest for nationhood. This involves inculcating in the citizenry, beginning from childhood, consciousness about their rights and obligations within their environment with the ultimate objective of making a better world out of the current world system while earning a living (Omotoseye, 1999; Ogunyemi, 2014). The emergence of Social Studies was based on the criticism that traditional social sciences and arts-based subjects inherited from the colonial education system were in purpose and content not relevant to the local experience and needs of the Nigerian society (Mbaba & Omabe, 2012). Social Studies education is widely conceived as a veritable tool through which the learners' capacities for social interaction and problem-solving are built.

In the Nigerian context, Social Studies as an area of learning is designed to establish a solid and well-rounded foundation for effective social education. It is aimed at nurturing responsible, self-directed, and intelligent citizens while effectively integrating social knowledge through the medium of the Social Studies curriculum. Given its rich content, Social Studies plays and continues to play a crucial role in equipping citizens with the critical requirements and knowledge of their fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and the core principles of democracy and other issues needed for civil engagements. This knowledge is essential for fostering national development and addressing the prevailing challenges related to national security in Nigeria (Mustapha, *et. al*., 2022; Okobia, 2020).

However, despite the promising beginnings of Social Studies education in Nigeria at both primary and secondary education levels,

as well as in colleges and universities, it appears that the subject may not have fully realized its educational objectives. This can be attributed in part to the negative perception of the subject by traditional subject specialists, shortage of appropriate textbooks, and lack of qualified teachers proficient in the teaching of Social Studies across all educational levels (Meziobi, 2012; Sofadekan, 2012; Ogunyemi, 2014; Shuaibu, Shaibu & Obaje, 2022). Furthermore, with consistent reports of low quality of primary and secondary school teachers in the field, issues such as educators' inadequate subject-matter knowledge, low pedagogical competence, limited proficiency in information technology, and ineffective communication skills are gaining increasing attention among Social Studies scholars in Nigeria (Ogunyemi & Agbatogun, 2014; Agbatogun & Ogunyemi, 2015). This emerging trend was part of the initial motivation for this research in looking into the competencies of teacher educators as crucial factors influencing the performance of pre-service teachers in Social Studies at the College of Education level.

Professional competence has been described as one of the most important factors in improving cognitive abilities of educators (Arif, et. al., 2017). Elements of teacher educators' competence include their knowledge, attitude and skills which increase the capabilities of teachers to teach, educate, direct, train and examine the students (Zeravikova, 2015). Educators' competence also should include ability to learn, communicate, solve problem, conduct social interaction, and work with ICT or other support tools.

Ensuring that teachers have the necessary competence required to be efficient and effective in the classroom is one of the challenges for teacher educators. Therefore, motivating those saddled with the responsibility of teaching functions to ensure, expand and increase their level of professional competence is important in achieving the goals of a dynamic school subject like Social Studies. Competence is made up of measurable and observable knowledge, skills and attributes that help to enhance employee's performance and lead to the achievement for the organisation (Wuim-pam, 2014). The various components of competence include knowledge, skills, ability and

other individual personal attributes that reflect one's unique personal makeup. Educator or the teacher's competency level encompasses a fusion of practical and theoretical knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential for facilitating learners' activities and achieving desired learning outcomes. While Ganyaupfu (2013), and Ugorji (2022) have contended that lecturers' competencies exert a substantial impact on students' academic performance and their ability to retain and deploy what is taught for problem solving, there remains a need for further research due to inconclusive findings regarding the correlation between educators' personal attributes and students' scholastic achievements (Herdiyana, 2021; Ugorji, 2022).

Another variable of interest in this study is teachers' pedagogical skills, which encompass the way teachers teach and manage the learning process in the classroom (Nyoman et al., 2019). These skills include questioning skills, reinforcement skills, variation skills, explaining skills, as well as classroom management and organizational skills. Pedagogical skills have been shown to increase students' interest in learning (Sariaman, et al., 2020). However, the impact of pedagogical content and knowledge preparation can vary depending on the subject taught (Liu, et al., 2023). Equally of interest is lecturers' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, rooted in Bandura's social learning theory, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks within a defined timeframe (Bandura, 1977). Teacher self-efficacy (TE), as described by Shazia, Mahek, and Nadia (2017), encompasses the attributes of a teacher that contribute to their success. Research has indicated a correlation between teacher self-efficacy and students' academic achievement (Uzun, et al., 2010; Nasiru, 2020). Soluade and Agboola (2018) discovered a significant relationship between self-efficacy and the academic performance of pre-service Social Studies teachers. In the same vein, Hajovsky, Chesnut, and Jensen (2020) concluded that teachers with higher self-efficacy beliefs tend to report better relationships with students, characterized by greater closeness and less conflict.

The focus in education has increasingly shifted towards equipping students with 21st-century skills and competencies, which demand the ability to manage information and demonstrate competencies in skills acquired. This paradigm recognizes that the jobs of tomorrow have not yet materialized and require learners to possess skills such as collaborative problem-solving, creativity, hands-on learning, cultural competency, effective communication, information and media literacy, critical thinking, and leadership. However, most studies in Nigeria have primarily examined teacher factors at the primary and secondary education levels, with limited attention given to the professional and personal variables of teacher educators at the College of Education level and their relevance to 21st century competencies. This study, therefore, explored the professional competence of Social Studies educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

i. assess the level of self-efficacy among Social Studies teacher educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria.
ii. investigate the level of availability and usage of information and communication facilities by Social Studies teacher educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria.
iii. ascertain the proficiency level of Social Studies teacher educators in ICT skills in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria.
iv. examine the competence of Social Studies teacher educators in pedagogical skills within Southwest Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the level of self-efficacy among Social Studies teacher educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria?

2. To what extent are information and communication facilities available for the use of Social Studies teacher educators in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria?
3. What is the proficiency level of Social Studies teacher educators in ICT skills in Colleges of Education in Southwest, Nigeria?
4. How competent are Social Studies teacher educators in pedagogical skills within Southwest, Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of the *ex-post factor* type. The target population for this research consisted of all lecturers teaching Social Studies courses in all public Colleges of Education in Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Five public Colleges of Education offering Social Studies as one of their major courses were randomly chosen for the research based on the stratified simple random technique. Three instruments used for data collection: Educators Information and Communication Competence Assessment (EICCA), Pedagogical Competence Scale for Teacher Educators (PCSTE), and Educators' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ESEQ). The research instruments were developed and used for the collection of data from the identified respondents based on the objectives of the study. The reliability coefficients of for PCSTE, ESEQ and EICCA were 0.84, 0.72, and 0.75, respectively. The data collected were coded and analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of educators' self-efficacy?

The percentages and means of educators' self-efficacy are shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Level of Educators' Self-efficacy

Items	NAAT	HT	MT	ET	Mean	SD
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	12 (30.0)	25 (62.5)	3.53	.716
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	1 (2.5)	4 (10.0)	21 (37.5)	14 (35.0)	3.20	.723
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	15 (37.5)	22 (55.0)	3.45	.714
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	2 (5.0)	4 (10.0)	17 (42.5)	17 (42.5)	3.22	.832
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	1 (2.5)	6 (15.0)	16 (40.0)	17 (42.5)	3.23	.800
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	0 (0.0)	4 (10.0)	14 (40.0)	22 (55.0)	3.45	.677
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	1 (2.5)	4 (10.0)	18 (45.0)	17 (42.5)	3.28	.751
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	0 (0.0)	5 (12.5)	15 (37.5)	20 (50.0)	3.38	.705
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	15 (37.5)	21 (52.5)	3.40	.744
I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	1 (2.5)	4 (10.0)	18 (45.0)	17 (42.5)	3.28	.751
I can do anything to influence the class sizes in my school.	3 (7.5)	7 (17.5)	18 (45.0)	12 (30.0)	2.98	.891
I can go extra miles to get through to the most difficult students.	1 (2.5)	6 (15.0)	23 (57.5)	10 (25.0)	3.05	.714

I can do many thing to promote learning when there is lack of support from the home.	0 (0.0)	2 (5.0)	23 (57.5)	15 (37.5)	3.32	.572
I can keep students on task on difficult assignments.	0 (0.0)	3 (7.5)	22 (55.0)	15 (37.5)	3.30	.608
I can put more efforts to increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons.	0 (0.0)	2 (5.0)	18 (45.0)	20 (50.0)	3.45	.597
I can motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork.	1 (2.5)	2 (5.0)	13 (32.5)	24 (60.0)	3.50	.716
I can encourage to get students to work together.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	16 (40.0)	24 (60.0)	3.60	.496
I can do a lot to overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning.	0 (0.0)	5 (12.5)	20 (50.0)	15 (37.5)	3.25	.670
I can always get students to do their homework.	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	19 (47.5)	17 (42.5)	3.30	.723
I can do anything to get students to follow classroom rules.	0 (0.0)	3 (7.5)	20 (50.0)	17 (42.5)	3.35	.622
I can control disruptive behaviour in the classroom.	0 (0.0)	1 (2.5)	14 35.0)	25 (62.5)	3.60	.545
I can do anything to prevent problem behaviour on the school grounds.	4 (10. 0)	2 (5.0)	22 (55.0)	12 (30.0)	3.05	.876

Mean aggregate = 3.33 SD = 0.17

Table 1 reveals that when moderately true (MT) and exactly true (ET) are combined, they have higher percentages for all the items ranging between 75.0% and 100.0%. It follows that majority of the respondents agreed that all the stated items are true of them. The mean aggregate (3.33) which is greater than the mean benchmark (2.5) indicates that there is a high level of self-efficacy among the teacher educators.

Research Question 2: What is the level of availability of information and communication gadgets for Social Studies teacher educators' use in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 2 presents data on the educators' access to information and communication technology gadgets.

Table 2: Level of Teacher Educators' Information and Communication Competence

Items	**HA %**	**A %**	**SA %**	**NA %**	**Mean**	**SD**
Desktop/laptop computer for personal use	2 (5.0)	9 (22.5)	19 (47.5)	10 (25.0)	2.07	.829
Personal email account	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	21 (52.5)	15 37.5	1.75	.707
Internet	1 (2.5)	10 (25.0)	21 (52.5)	8 20.0	2.10	.744
Printer	6 (15.0)	15 (37.5)	11 27.5	8 20.0	2.48	.987
Digital cameras	16 40.0	13 32.5	9 22.5	2 5.0	3.07	.917
Technical support	11 27.5	18 45.0	10 25.0	1 2.5	2.97	.800
Digital projectors/interactive whiteboards	9 22.5	13 32.5	16 40.0	2 5.0	2.73	.877
Desktop computers for student use in your classroom	23 57.5	13 32.5	4 10.0	0 0.0	3.48	.679
Desktop computers for student use elsewhere at school (e.g. computer lab)	8 20.0	18 45.0	11 27.5	3 7.5	2.77	.862

Laptop computers for student use	19 47.5	16 40.0	5 12.5	0 0.0	3.35	.700
Training in the use of computers / basic computer	2 5.0	18 45.0	14 35.0	6 15.0	2.40	.810
Word processing (e.g. MSWord)	4 10.0	19 47.5	13 32.5	4 10.0	2.58	.813
Spreadsheets (e.g. Excel)	9 22.5	15 37.5	11 27.5	5 12.5	2.70	.966
Presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint)	9 22.5	16 40.0	12 30.0	3 7.5	2.78	.891

Mean aggregate = 2.66 SD = 0.48

Table 2 shows that when highly available (HA) and available (A) are combined, they have higher percentages for eleven out of the 14 items ranging between 50.0% and 90.0%. It follows that majority of the respondents agreed that they have eleven out of the 14 stated items. The mean aggregate (2.66) which is greater than the mean benchmark (2.5) indicates that there is a high level of educators' information communication competence.

Research Question 3: What is the level of ICT skills possessed by the educators?

The findings of the level of ICT skills possessed by educators are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Level of ICT skills of the educators

Items	VA %	SA %	L %	NAA %	Mean	SD
I can use windows explorer to navigate file on computer	5 12.5	4 10.0	15 37.5	16 40.0	1.95	1.011
I can use my email for many operations on the system excellently well	1 2.5	7 17.5	13 32.5	19 47.5	1.75	.840
With the world wide web/internet, I can conduct complex searches, download, install, save images and text conveniently	2 5.0	2 5.0	17 42.5	19 47.5	1.68	.797
I am very comfortable using Microsoft word to create, open, format document and as well carry out other operations	1 2.5	7 17.5	8 20.0	24 60.0	1.62	.868
I can use Microsoft Power point for the purpose of presentation with ease	1 2.5	6 15.0	14 35.0	19 47.5	1.73	.816
I am competent in the use of Microsoft excel for the purpose of spread sheet	2 5.0	9 22.5	15 37.5	14 35.0	1.98	.891

Mean aggregate = 1.78 SD = 0.15

From Table 3, when very adequate (VA) and somehow adequate (SA) are combined, the educators have lower percentages for all the items ranging between 10.0% and 27.5%. It follows that majority of the respondents agreed that they have little or no ICT skills. The mean aggregate (1.78) which is lesser than the mean benchmark (2.5) indicates that there is low level of ICT skills among the educators.

Research Question 4: What is the level of pedagogical competence of the educators?

Table 4 presents the data on pedagogical competencies among the educators.

Table 4: Level of Pedagogical Competences of the Educators

Items (What the teacher educator does or does not do)	**PW %**	**MWTS %**	**MSTW %**	**PS %**	**Mean**	**SD**
Ensures a relaxed atmosphere	0 (0.0)	3 (7.5)	20 (50.0)	17 (42.5)	3.35	.622
Shows respect for the student-teachers in behaviour and language use	0 (0.0)	3 (7.5)	23 (57.5)	14 (35.0)	3.28	.599
Promotes mutual respect and interest of pre-service teachers	0 (0.0)	4 (10.0)	22 (55.0)	14 (35.0)	3.25	.630
Supports the self-confidence of students	0 0.0	3 7.5	30 75.0	7 17.5	3.10	.496
Encourage students to do their utmost best	0 0.0	5 12.5	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.05	.552
Clarifies the lesson objectives at the start of each lesson	0 0.0	4 10.0	28 70.0	8 20.0	3.10	.545
Evaluates whether the objectives have been achieved at the end of the lesson	0 0.0	10 25.0	24 60.0	6 15.0	2.90	.632
gives clear instructions and explanations	0 0.0	3 7.5	24 60.0	13 32.5	3.25	.588
Gives clear explanations of the learning materials and the assignments	1 2.5	4 10.0	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.02	.620
Involves all pre-service teachers in the lesson delivery	0 0.0	11 27.5	19 47.5	10 25.0	2.98	.733
Makes use of teaching methods that actively engage the students	1 2.5	4 10.0	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.03	.620
Poses questions which encourage thinking	0 0.0	4 10.0	28 70.0	8 20.0	3.10	.545

Checks whether pre-service teachers understand the lesson content	0 0.0	6 15.0	27 67.5	7 17.5	3.02	.577
Gives feedback on answers of learners	0 0.0	5 12.5	29 72.5	6 15.0	3.02	.530
Checks whether students are completing the assignments correctly	11 27.5	3 7.5	20 50.0	6 15.0	2.53	1.062
Gives a well-structured lesson that serve as models to pre-service teachers	0 0.0	4 10.0	28 70.0	8 20.0	3.10	.545
Ensures the orderly progression of the lesson	0 0.0	2 5.0	23 57.5	15 37.5	3.32	.572
Uses learning time efficiently	0 0.0	2 5.0	23 57.5	15 37.5	3.33	.572
Ensures efficient classroom management	0 0.0	1 2.5	23 57.5	16 40.0	3.37	.540
Adapts the instruction to the relevant differences among students	0 0.0	6 15.0	27 67.5	7 17.5	3.03	.577
Adapts the assignments and processing to the relevant differences among students	2 5.0	10 25.0	23 57.5	5 12.5	2.77	.733
Offers struggling students extra learning or instruction time	9 22.5	7 17.5	21 52.5	3 7.5	2.45	.932
Supports the self-confidence of struggling learners	7 17.5	9 22.5	23 57.5	1 2.5	2.45	.815
Stimulates students to think about solutions	0 0.0	5 12.5	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.05	.552
Let students speak aloud while thinking	0 0.0	5 12.5	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.05	.552

Teaches learners how to break down complicated problems	1 2.5	4 10.0	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.03	.620
Teaches students how to check solutions	0 0.0	5 12.5	28 70.0	7 17.5	3.05	.552
Ensures that the teaching materials are Orientated towards transfer	0 0.0	2 5.0	32 80.0	6 15.0	3.10	.441
Fosters critical thinking in students	0 0.0	4 10.0	31 77.5	5 12.5	3.03	.480
Invites students to use strategies which can help them solve different types of problems	0 0.0	6 15.0	31 77.5	3 7.5	2.92	.474
Stimulates the use of control activities	0 0.0	6 15.0	30 75.0	4 10.0	2.95	.504
Provides interactive instruction and activities	0 0.0	6 15.0	27 67.5	7 17.5	3.02	.577

Mean aggregate = 3.03 SD = 0.23

Table 3 shows that when more strength than weakness (MSTW) and predominantly strong (PS) are combined, the educators have higher percentages for all the items ranging between 60.0% and 97.0%. It follows that majority of the respondents agreed that they are pedagogically sound. The mean aggregate (3.03), which is greater than the mean benchmark (2.5), indicates that there is high level of pedagogical competence among the educators.

Discussions

Findings from the descriptive statistics showed that there was a high level of availability of facilities for educators' information and communication, low level of educators' ICT skills and high level of pedagogical competencies of the educators. Three out of the four educator variables measured were found to be high while educator ICT skills were found to be low. The findings in this respect

corroborate the findings of Khuram and Sajida (2017), Sharma and Abraham (2014), and Yusuf and Amali (2013) who recorded high educators' information and communication competence and pedagogical competence in their respective reports. However, the results run contrary to the findings of Okobia (2020) who recorded high educator ICT skills in his study. What accounted for the findings might be due to that fact most of educators were lecturers on senior cadre who have been practising for a long period and may be reluctant to acquire new skills, including ICT skills. However, the low ICT skills suggested that most of senior academic staff of Colleges of Education did not have enough information and communication technology skills and this gap in capacity should be further investigated and addressed.

Conclusion

One implication of the findings of this study is that educators' professional development plays an important role in promoting qualitative teacher education in Colleges of Education., professional competence in terms of educators' pedagogical ability, and ICT skills may wield more influence in the education of contemporary student-teachers. With advancement in science and technology, education has ceased to be an activity of transmitting knowledge from teachers (educators) to learners (student teachers) but a holistic process which involves critical engagements among elements of the environment (including ICT).

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, it was recommended that Social Studies teacher educators at the College of Education level should be availed opportunities to continue upgrading their knowledge to improve their pedagogical competence and classroom (online or offline) delivery. This will rub positively on the academic achievement of their students. Social Studies lecturers in Colleges of Education should regularly attend refresher courses and enroll for additional academic and professional qualifications to enhance their capacities for teaching and learning as 21st educators.

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